



FLAIR

THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

A TRIBUTE TO INVOLVEMENT

Commitment to serving others a trademark of YWCA award winners

Stories by Terri Finch Hamilton
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Inspiration. Power. Commitment. Energy. They show such things in different ways. One expresses hope through art. Others make reality out of dreams. One woman uses her passion for helping others to inspire her four young sons.

They're the winners of this year's Tribute! Awards, given annually by the YWCA to honor our community's outstanding women.

Five women are recognized for their accomplishments in advocacy, arts; business, management and industry; community service, professions. One 17-year-old will be honored in the student category, both to recognize her achievements and inspire her to continue to excel.

The winners - profiled here and on Page C2 - will be honored at a luncheon Wednesday at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. But because of their efforts, everyone wins.



Carol Karr

PROFESSIONS

She's earned an impressive list of firsts, an exceptional professional rating, prestigious awards and the respect of her peers.

Ask attorney Carol Karr what her secret is, and she'll tell you: a supportive husband, helpful parents and a wonderful babysitter who has been there for her family for 14 years.

"Without them, I couldn't do half of what I do," said Karr. "I wish I could mandate this kind of support for everybody."

Karr is a member (a title formerly known as partner) at the Miller, Johnson, Snell and Commiskey law firm in Grand Rapids.

Her career is filled with firsts.

She's the first woman to lead the State Bar of Michigan Taxation Section and one of only two women in the Grand Rapids Bar Association to be named in the 1995 Best Lawyers in America.

Karr, 42, was the first chair of the state bar's Taxation Council gender bias committee. Last year she was awarded the Quotarian of the Year award for the state of Michigan for her community service and leadership. She's the first member in the 50-year history of the Grand Rapids Quota Club to win the state award.

While her list of female firsts is impressive, Karr says it doesn't represent her true mission - empowering all people, not just women.

The Harvard Law School graduate is president of Indian Trails Camp for the physically challenged, is involved in the Black Educational Excellence Program for African-American high school students, is active in the Ryerson Library Foundation Endowment Committee and has provided free legal services through Legal Aid of Western Michigan.

For years she was the only woman at Miller Johnson. She chaired her firm's recruiting committee to increase the percentage of women hired and mentors female associates and law students.

"A lot of women drop out - it's a demanding profession," she said. "More women are choosing not to sacrifice their family life."

Karr admits having "typical working mother guilt," but has found a way to succeed at work and motherhood.

She shares her professional and community activities with her four boys - Adam, 14, Ben, 11, Bill, 8, and Alex, 6. Out-of-town speeches turn into family weekends away.

When she has activities at Indian Trails Camp, the boys often go along.

"It shows them why this stuff is important to me," Karr said. "Then when I do have to go away to do something, they know it's for a good cause."

"And," Karr added, "it teaches them early the importance of helping other people."



PRESS ILLUSTRATION/MILT KLINGENSMITH

ARTS & COMMUNICATION

Artist and educator Eugenia Marve has taught art to troubled teens, senior citizens, drug abusers, the physically challenged, kindergartners, inmates.

Their pasts don't concern her. Their potential does.

Marve believes all life forms in the universe are part of one divine whole. Her sculptural ceramics and drawings typically include faces of different shades and shapes. Animals and people coexist in the same piece, symbolizing our kindred spirits.

"We need a healing component on this planet," said Marve, 47. "Through art, we can set a wonderful tone."

She teaches art at Riverside Middle School, but she has touched many students - of all ages, races and backgrounds. A visiting artist, workshop leader and lecturer at public schools and colleges, Marve stresses how similar all people are.



Eugenia Marve

She has gathered youngsters together from different ethnic and racial backgrounds to create art of ceramic tiles.

In her view, the process was as important as the product. It taught kids of different colors

they have a lot in common.

"In the traditional school arena we don't give kids a chance to talk about who they are, what they believe," said Marve, who earned bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art from Michigan State University.

"We don't tell them often enough. 'You have something very wonderful to say to people.'"

Her striking art of earth and sky, planets and animals, interesting faces and provocative themes has been widely exhibited and is in numerous national and international collections.

Her favorite piece sums up her philosophy, her educational mission. Called "Tree of Life," it's a ceramic tile mural representing people of all cultures coexisting happily.

Its positive message is a contrast to real life, said Marve, who was disheartened by the racial divisiveness caused by the O.J. Simpson murder trial.

"For as long as we've been on this planet, we've learned very little," she said.

She's making a difference the best way she can, through art and the young people she teaches. Her Riverside students learn more than the art of watercolor from their passionate teacher.

"On the first day of class I tell them why I believe they should be marvelous," Marve said. "I say, 'You are here, you are beautiful, I need you, the world needs you.'"



Bridget Lowakowski



Linda Samuelson



Beth Goebel



Diana Sieger

See profiles of these Tribute! winners on Page C2

TRIBUTE! *Awards recognize the diverse ways talents are used for good*

BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT, INDUSTRY

Feel free to call her, but Diana Sieger doesn't spend much time at her desk. You'll find "community junkies" like her, she said, out where things are happening.

In the eight years Sieger has been president of the Grand Rapids Foundation, she has doubled the foundation's assets to more than \$70 million and positioned it as a catalyst for change in areas of child abuse and neglect, education reform, neighborhood and leadership development.

Along the way, she's working on the foundation's image.

"A community foundation should be the place where people feel comfortable," said Sieger, 44. "People think you have to be rich to give to the Grand Rapids Foundation."

"When somebody sends in a \$25 check, we're ready to say thank you, and tell them where the money goes," Sieger said.

The foundation's first full-time executive director, Sieger believes collaboration is key to success. She gathered a diverse group of volunteers for Perspective 21, a community study on child abuse and neglect that already has improved the way social service agencies deal with kids in crisis.

She's also proud of a foundation annual awards program to



Diana Sieger

encourage academic excellence among teachers and students in the city's public and private schools. Foundation efforts are across the board — education, community development, culture, environment, health. Sieger is famous for bursting into foundation board meetings enthusiastically exclaiming "Guess what we're going to do now?"

Her vision for the future includes more "core city issues," she said, ones that deal with the formation of jobs and economic development.

A prominent force in the community, Sieger chairs Leadership Grand Rapids for the Chamber of Commerce and is on the Butterworth Hospital board and executive committee.

"We can be an effective catalyst," Sieger said, "but the solo act doesn't work anymore. There's no one organization that can take responsibility for things. And there shouldn't be."

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Women, water, wonderful ideas. As Beth Goebel's thoughts turn to the community's needs, these are the themes that inspire her.

Executive director of the Dyer-Ives Foundation, president of the Michigan Women's Foundation and president of the environmental program of the Inland Seas Board, 62-year-old Goebel has devoted much of her adult life to community service.

It all started in the 1950s, when as a mother and homemaker she joined the Grand Rapids Junior League, which she calls "a much-maligned group that was a wonderful training ground."

Her training is served her well. Goebel co-chaired the YWCA's \$1.8 million capital campaign and orchestrated two of the YWCA's extensive renovations. The revamped YWCA building on Sheldon Blvd is known over there as "The House That Beth Re-built."

Other evidence of her



Beth Goebel

commitment includes the child sexual abuse treatment program at the YWCA, which she secured grant money for in the 1980s.

At Dyer-Ives for the last 11 years, Goebel has encouraged grant requests for innovative programs that otherwise might not be funded — from telephones for the homeless to a playground renovation for a city school.

"I don't mind taking risks on people who think they have a great idea," she said. "It's as much a challenge to give money away responsibly as it is to raise it."

As president of the Michigan Women's Foundation she oversees projects "that promote the role that women play — and sometimes don't get to play — in society," said Goebel, who with husband Paul has three grown children and two grandchildren. She scoffs at history textbooks "that say maybe one line about women getting the right to vote."

She's president of the Inland Seas Board, a Sutton's Bay-based environmental program that takes students out on an 80-foot tall ship. The goal is to foster the same sense that avid sailor Goebel has of our lakes' fragility and need for preservation.

"All these things are logical extensions of my life," Goebel said. "It feels good to make a difference."

STUDENT

Everybody needs a pat on the back once in a while.

Everybody needs a friend. Bridget Lewakowski knows such things don't happen automatically.

So the City High School senior started the "Pat on the Back" committee at her school in Grand Rapids to recognize students and teachers on their birthdays and for outstanding achievement. She created a "Senior Buddies" program pairing seventh-graders with seniors to show them the ropes and help them with homework.

Outside school she volunteers at the Public Museum of Grand Rapids and its Blandford Nature Center, is a member of the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids and is active at St. Alphonsus Church.

"When I started to volunteer, I didn't set out to do a hundred different things," said Bridget, 17, daughter of Aloise and Michael Lewakowski



Bridget Lewakowski

of Northeast Grand Rapids. Famous first words.

"Every time I do something new," she said, "it seems like it leads to something else."

It started when she was 11 and her grandmother, Alice O'Connor, a docent at the Public Museum of Grand Rapids, invited her to come along and help. Bridget stuck around.

This fall found her dressed in old-fashioned work clothes at Blandford Nature Center, churning butter and answering questions about how things were in pioneer life.

She's a student member of the Arts Council of Greater Grand Rapids, sitting on the arts and education committee.

"I thought it would be interesting to see that end — how they decide about funding groups," Bridget said.

It's more than a passing curiosity.

Bridget has been a member of the Grand Rapids Ballet senior company for six years. She started dancing when she was 3, and attends classes five times a week. She'll dance in "The Nutcracker" next month.

She somehow fits in four hours of homework a night and has maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average since seventh grade.

"I really like learning new things and meeting new people," Bridget said.

"When a little kid comes up to me at Blandford and I can tell him something he never knew before, it feels great."

ADVOCACY

When Linda Samuelson was 5, her mother taught her to greet adults by name, shake their hand firmly, say things that made a difference.

It all happened at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, where Samuelson's father was minister. But it didn't end there.

"It was an important lesson I learned early," Samuelson said. "That there was power in my voice to do good."

A Grand Rapids City Commissioner for the last 11 years and executive director of the Grand Rapids Area Council for the Humanities, Samuelson has spent most of her adult life as an advocate for social change.

Her most important message, she said, is that anybody can be an advocate.

"You don't have to be at a microphone or podium to be an advocate," she said. "You don't have to be a public figure or speak loudly. It's in day-to-day living when it's most important to say what's right, what needs to be done."

During state-mandated deinstitutionalization of mental facility patients, Samuelson served on the South Kent Mental Health Board, seeing to it that released patients found help in the community.

Last July when she worked for

passage of the city's controversial gender equity ordinance Samuelson endured threatening phone calls and letters.

Samuelson doesn't always pick up popular causes. She said that's by design.

"Advocacy is speaking up for people who aren't in a position to speak for themselves," she said.

Focusing early in her career on judicial reform, she walked into 61st District Court and volunteered to overhaul the bail system, so that indigents jailed on minor offenses would be released on their own recognizance, unjamming the jails and court system.

Then she went to local foundations and raised the money for her own salary.

"It was a small problem I understood," Samuelson said. "I wasn't looking to change the universe."

That's key to her philosophy today — making a difference in everyday ways.

"Doesn't everyone hope that their activities in life will make a difference?" Samuelson asked.

"Part of the human condition is to want to make things better."



Linda Samuelson